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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001050

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SUBJECT: LABOR STRIKE DAY 3: ANTICIPATION OF FRIDAY PRAYERS

REF: ABUJA 1040 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN CAMPBELL FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) AND (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: The National Labour Congress (NLC) strike opened its third day with a sense of anticipation. NLC teams continue circulating in many parts of the country checking gas stations and telling the public that the strike remains on. GON officials are seen on TV similarly checking gas station prices in Abuja and Lagos, shutting down pumps marked higher than the earlier price. Spokesmen at the NLC were outraged by the shootings at NLC headquarters June 10 but have yet to decide on the future of the strike. In a public announcement late June 10, Adams Oshiomhole expressed satisfaction about the wide public participation and called for donations to support the victims of police violence. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) This cable is a joint product of Embassy Abuja and Consulate General Lagos.

3. (SBU) Attendance at government offices and other locations was mixed, as in past days (reftels), and somewhat heavier than usual security presence continues throughout the country. Extra security personnel have been stationed at Abuja's major mosques in an effort to head off any confrontation after Friday prayers. Major businesses and banks remain closed, and reports indicate that the NLC has mobilized its compliance teams throughout the country.

Yesterday's Violence

4. (SBU) The strike remained non-violent today, but much of the public was apprehensive about yesterday's security incidents. A reputable eyewitness to the shootings at the NLC headquarters maintains that he saw the two victims carried away in a police vehicle and says that a third person could have been wounded in the leg. Police officials now claim two "okada" (motorcycle taxi) drivers fought with police at the Federal Secretariat about 3PM on June 10 and one of the died en route to the hospital, implying that people were exaggerating the admitted beating of the two drivers and that there was no shooting at the NLC. It is unclear whether any incident occurred at the Federal Secretariat or if the police are using the story to cover up

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the other incident. An Emboff who went to the Federal Secretariat within minutes of the shooting report saw people

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just sitting around as normal, and none of them said they had seen a fight or NLC officials or the Police Commissioner on site.

Questions from Independent Marketers

5. (U) A spokesman for the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association (IAPM) complained in a radio broadcast that the GON order to revert to the former 38 Naira/liter price would drive most filling stations out of business. "The Government gives preferential treatment to the major marketers," he claimed, saying that Texaco, Chevron, Shell and "the companies owned by (President) Obasanjo and (VP) Atiku" were able to purchase discounted fuel. "Seventy percent of the marketers must buy from the major companies at a higher rate," he posited. He also criticized enforcement of the pricing structure, saying that the GON was unable to ensure compliance outside Abuja and Lagos.

What's Next?

6. (U) The NLC is holding a strategy meeting in the evening June 11 and will likely announce a decision later on whether to continue the strike. One Labor official told Poloff that the NLC could consider suspending the strike if compliance with the court order was "substantial, at least fifty percent." At this point, compliance is increasing in Abuja and Lagos, but there are reports that non-government stations in other parts of the country are beginning to open and sell

fuel at any price they choose.

17. (C) COMMENT: It appears the GON is making an effort to enforce compliance with the court order. If both sides make the appropriated noises about Thursday's violence, Labor may suspend or end the strike soon. With substantial compliance with the old pricing system, the NLC would be in a position to declare victory and go home (or back to work).
CAMPBELL